

**Linda Clair**  
**Seven-day Meditation Retreat**  
**Kallara Conference Centre, Australia**  
**30 November – 7 December 2019**  
**Transcription from Audio Recordings**

**File 1b – Saturday afternoon discussion session**

Question: I nearly said, “When I woke up,” but I meant when I opened my eyes. I had a smile on my face but I was completely unaware of anything, and I don’t think I was nodding.

Linda: No, you weren’t asleep.

Question: But I do feel pretty tired.

Linda: I started off feeling a little bit tired and then I felt, no, I’m not really tired I’m just feeling very, very quiet. So there is a difference, and you can mistake it for tiredness. And if you say, “Okay, I’m tired,” then you can just get into it and go, “Yes, I’m really tired.” Or you can go, “No, it’s something else.” You don’t know what it is; it’s something else. So watch that really carefully.

Question: That makes a lot of sense because all through the sit I had some determination that I don’t usually have. I really wanted to sit rather than go to sleep. And I did have one time when I nodded but I didn’t want to go into that. But when I opened my eyes the sensation was deep tiredness, but actually you’re right, it could just be I’m very quiet.

Linda: It can easily be mistaken for tiredness but it’s not real tiredness, it’s not tiredness.

So this retreat is going to be deeply silent in every way. So don’t push. I don’t want any pushing or heroics. Just sit, deeply in your body. Just sit.

I really want you to use these discussion periods to ask anything. And don’t judge your question as banal or simplistic – the most basic questions are often the most valuable questions.

It’s hard to believe only two weeks ago I was in the UK, in Newbury, halfway through a retreat there. There were some really good questions. A lot of the people I hadn’t met before and most of them weren’t as mature meditators as you. And that’s probably why the questions were so interesting, because they were asking them from what they saw as the beginners’ point of view. And they were just basic questions. It was really interesting, so never think that your question is too basic, too stupid or whatever. There is never a stupid question.

Question: I always felt like I experience pain very easily, so somatically I’m very – I don’t know whether more aware or just more sensitive, I’m not sure what that is. I know it shifts and changes a bit and it’s very easy to pathologize it in a way, like, “I’ve got a bad neck.” And when I was just sitting then I was really comfortable for the first sit and then I got familiar neck pain at the base of the skull, quite intense. My first thought is, “I’ll go and get a Panadol,” and then I thought I’d just

watch it, and it seems to have subsided. So I wonder is this postural or is it something else coming up? I find it interesting that these things tend to come in similar places, and then they go.

Linda: So is it mainly while you're sitting?

Question: Yes, mostly.

Linda: So the pain that you feel while you're sitting meditating in a formal situation like this, particularly during a retreat, is different to normal physical pain. And it does become fascinating because you see how as soon as you feel pain you go for the painkiller, which is either something like Panadol or thinking. Because thinking – most people use it as a bit of an anaesthetic to dull that intensity of reality, now.

So with this practice your pain threshold, if you keep at it, does start to rise. So you start to be able to put up with a lot more pain than usual. And like I said, it's not strictly physical pain, it's the pain that you've been avoiding for most of your life. And in a situation like this you start to feel it. It doesn't matter so much where you feel it in your body. There might be some sort of physical weakness that gets accentuated – like often when you're sitting your knees can hurt, and different places.

But it's just a manifestation of your emotional pain in your body. And that's why the body is so valuable, and why this practice is all about the body, because it's something very tangible that you can feel. Even though it's uncomfortable – and it is uncomfortable – there is this feeling of aliveness about it too because it's forcing you to be in your body. So it's difficult. And the pain will come and go, if you look at it really carefully it does fluctuate, and it comes and goes. It's quite fascinating watching it, but it's not comfortable.

Question: I have noticed I can tolerate more since I've been doing the longer sitting here.

Linda: It's a purification of the body and the pain that you feel is just really energy blocks. People talk about chakras and energy and all that stuff but really it is just blockages in the body where energy is coming in. You're starting to feel that energy and then it's meeting blocks in you, of your past, and triggering that pain. And then there's often a whole lot of thoughts associated with the pain – "I can't stand this; I've got to get rid of it." But if you look at it very, very closely – get as close as possible to it – the quality of it starts to change. And you also have to look at this judgement – "Pain bad." We're brought up from when we are children to go, "Pain bad, something has to be done about it." So try not to take Panadol unless it's something really, really strong. But where is that point where it's unbearable?

Question: I have been trying to do that every time that comes, to just go underneath it, try and really sit and see what's underneath it. That's been really valuable since doing the sits with you.

Linda: So breathe – the breath will help just to make it a bit more bearable and to stabilise you, but not necessarily to take it away. You're not using your breath to try and get rid of it. And just watch that desire for it to go – "I can't stand this, I want it to go, I want to be comfortable." But really you're here because being comfortable isn't enough. So it will be intense at times.

Question: I feel like in the last two sittings I've found it easy to sit with the pain, but I felt a lot of really old stuff. I didn't feel I was emotionally connected to the story around them, but a lot of things from the past were just sort of circling around. It was really quite an intense triggering of school things. I didn't feel like I was going into a story around them but it was quite an intense triggering of them. At one point my calf was killing me and it was good to feel the breathing softening that. And it broke this triggering of old – I don't know if it was memories, it felt different to memories. It felt like it had no connection to me but I knew all the details. It was quite an odd thing from the past or something.

Linda: How have you been A.?

Question: One interesting thing that has happened, maybe in the last six months, is this complete change in the way I see this practice. Because I remember when I first came into this and was seeing you five or six years ago, and it was all about this idea that it was growth and unfolding and development of new faculties of perception. It was all about changing and bringing in something new. And from the stuff I've gone through in the last year I feel a deepening awareness of what's going on internally. I now see this practice as really just the working through and experiencing and releasing the trauma that's been stored in my body all through my life, from childhood. And that's all it is. It's not about developing anything new or bringing in any new awareness or new way of perceiving. I guess all of that's blocked by all this fear and trauma we have stored in our body. It's been really fascinating to have this almost complete reversal of how I see this practice – it's not about developing anything new or learning new faculties.

Linda: It's almost the opposite.

Question: Yes, it's just seeing what's inside and getting to that point where you can start to have the strength to let it come up and be felt deeply, and experienced without the fear associated with it. You were talking about the pain being like a break, and I feel thinking is like that too, because when it gets too intense you just go back into thought.

Linda: It's like taking a drug; it's this habitual thing. Pain – emotional or whatever – get away from it, pretend you're somewhere else, pretend you're not feeling it. And when the pain in the body is very intense when you're doing this you can't get away from it, you're just forced to be here. You can try and resist it and try and think but really you can't think your way out of it, it's there.

Question: Also, it's been fascinating to have this idea that I'm releasing this trauma that I didn't even know I was carrying. And it's strange that as I feel it more deeply in myself, I've been feeling it more deeply in all the other people I interact with as well. Sometimes it's been quite shocking, with people at work, suddenly seeing how much pain and trauma this person is carrying, and probably has no idea.

Linda: Well, you do think you're going to become more special, more developed, a completely new being, whereas you don't. And it is shocking. On realisation the thing I felt was, "How did I survive with all this tension or trauma in me, trying to keep everything together?" I had no idea how I survived so long carrying that amount of trauma around. And your whole body does just suddenly give way in an amazing, beautiful way. But you don't become anything.

Question: Yes, this whole thing of developing new faculties and all this stuff. I assume it is possible to develop new ways of perceiving and using your mind.

Linda: It's not new it's just basic, more primal. And you do hear and see things and feel things that you didn't feel before, but it's only because your head is not full of thought, the past. So you become very innocent, fresh, everything is new.

We were in Euroa today and I saw this window, and it had that fake snow with a stencil on it saying something, and it was interesting because I had this nice feeling. Because we used to do that when I was a kid and I loved doing it – spraying this snow stuff on the stencil saying Happy Christmas. But that was all it was – there wasn't this train of thought remembering it or anything. It was just this very simple, lovely feeling and that was it. It was interesting seeing that. And yet that thought would never have come up – it was just that I saw it, the fake snow.

Question: For me, I felt like I've been walking around with all these wounds without even realising, so all I'm doing is healing these wounds.

Linda: So to heal them you have to expose them, and that's the painful part, exposing those wounds. That's because you're so used to trying to put something over them to hide them.

Question: I'm feeling lately that I'm getting very dull and useless. And I think, "I suppose I'm just getting very old and that happens." So I don't know if it's part of this work or whether it's just old age.

Linda: I don't think it is old age. Someone was telling me this morning about this eighty-three year old body builder who fought off a burglar in New York. It doesn't need to be your age. So don't identify as an old person. Of course you're a bit older – eighty-eight? – and it's very impressive that you're here. But if you keep saying, "I do this because I'm old, I don't do this because I'm old," that's how you're going to be. So don't use age as a reason to give up. Just as you can use young as an excuse for doing things don't use being older as an excuse for not doing things. So don't identify with it. You have to take into consideration eighty-eight but don't give in to it.

Question: But then I don't always want to talk to people at all.

Linda: That's got nothing to do with your age. I think that's part of this whole practice. That does happen with this, and socialising with people does take a lot of energy. Especially socialising as B., and particularly with people you've known for a long time, because they're going to want to treat you as you've always been and see you as you might have been twenty years ago. So it can be draining and can take quite a bit of energy. So for that reason a lot of people, at certain stages during this practice, don't feel like socialising a lot. Because they don't want to be pigeon-holed or being made to feel, "This is who you are; this is how you behave." And if you behave differently they get upset or say there's something wrong with you. And if you don't want to see them they think there is something wrong with you or them or whatever. But really you're just conserving your energy. And that's one of the reasons one does tend to feel like being by yourself at certain times.

Question: And then there's the memory. It's not working very well.

Linda: Well, mine doesn't either. I don't think you've got dementia or anything, but a lot of people do get worried about that when they do this practice because there are similarities, particularly in the beginning. So it's difficult to say exactly what it is but I would say it's not that.

This does affect the memory and it can really put people off. It doesn't matter how old you are – you can be twenty-five or eighty-five – it's still going to affect it. When you're older you do get a bit concerned that maybe it's something else, but usually it's not, it's quite a normal thing. What I did and what I still do is be really disciplined about not relying on my memory. So just for little things I don't rely on my memory. Write things down, if you're cooking something don't walk out of the room, I try not to do that because inevitably I'll forget about it because it's suddenly not there, there's something else. And I'm not walking around going, "I've got to remember this, I've got to remember this." So if you do that, if you are more disciplined with writing down and making sure you never rely on your memory, it does help to clear the whole trying-to-remember thing. Because a bit part of this is this desire to remember – "Who am I without my memories?" – because most of us base who we are on our past, on our memories. So there's a deep fear of letting go of trying to remember things because it's like I'm letting go of me, who I am.

So it's quite a normal thing and I can't say for sure that it's this but it probably is. You can test it out by seeing that it doesn't really deteriorate. But forgetting stuff on the stove is just part of this, but it's also part of the beginning of Alzheimer's. But then you do start to see it's not that, it's something completely different. And this does really affect your memory. But in the end it's so good not having all this stuff swirling around in your head all the time – you see something and it triggers this train of thought about something that might have happened fifty years ago. So I'm not saying try and forget, I'm saying don't try and remember, don't rely on your memory, because that's just feeding the whole thinking process. There is a difference.